LIVING "FIRST LADIES of the LAND"

Mrs Theodore Roosevelt, Taken When Her Husband Was President.

The Widow of President Garfield, As She Has Appeared In Recent Years

Mrs. James A. Garfield, As She Appeared When Her Husband Was In The White House.

The Widow of Benjamin Harrison, From A Recent Photograph.
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As Mrs. Harrison Appeared When An Occupant of the White House.
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Most Venerable of the Mistresses of the White House is the Widow of President Garfield, Who Recently Celebrated Her Eightieth Birthday

DO YOU know that there are still living no fewer than five women who have enjoyed the honors of the White House, four of them in their time bearing the title, popularly conferred, of First Lady of the Land, the fifth becoming the wife of a president after his retirement from his high office?

The fates that seem to watch over women and preserve them to longer life than is granted to their husbands have performed that gracious office more generously to the wives of presidents than to those of any other Americans. Only two presidents survive, and one is the present executive. Apart from Mr. and Mrs. Taft, the proportion of wives surviving White House years is as four to one of husbands, even though the vitality of Colonel Roosevelt may be appraised as equal to that of any four other men who have held the presidential office.

The sorrow that attends all such partings at the grave has left its mark on the majority of these women, whose husbands' rise to distinction so strikingly exalted them to the greatest height our social body affords, and one at least has lived her long years in the somber shadow of the dire tragedy which has invariably come to the American people as a national misfortune, in which all share the mourning of the victim's immediate family.

But they, like other widows less conspicuous in the public eye, have proved how beautifully, how gently and sweetly they can bear their sorrow. They show how no eminence, however imposing, can change the essential nature of the American wife and mother from that admirable type of matronly strength and dignity which has been the object of humanity's reverence since the simple annals of the Old Testament depicted the family as the source and center of all that is good and pure in a people's character.

SHE who passed through the most cruel ordeal among all these ladies of the White House lives still, an old, old woman, her fourscore years a crown of lovely age, her nature only made more gentle, more lovable by the bitter anguish of the time, when at the very beginning of a career which might have been fruitful of splendid achievement her husband was shot down by an assassin.

Mrs. Lucretia Garfield was a farmer's daughter, born at Hiram, Portage county, in Ohio, in 1832. Hers was a romance such as so many thousands of American girls know; it would be accounted no romance at all by the average writer of fiction. But if he were a great writer he could not fail to descry in its simple, homely course the elements of the finest, most appealing love story, just because it is so typical of our national existence. She and Mr. Garfield were students at Hiram when they met, and it was a true boy and girl attachment, the first love that came to the hearts of both. But their marriage was deferred, as many another has been deferred, until they felt they must meet fortune together and conquer it by their united efforts. She became his wife when she was 26 years old, in Hudson, O.

As time passed and political preferment found Mr. Garfield one of those most fitted for favor, his wife proved one of those women who are qualified to share any station their husbands can attain. She possessed that soul of good breeding which draws its inspiration from a nature at once strong and sympathetic, and Washington, capital of a mighty nation, found in her the qualities which have been attributes of so many other women who at the time of their wedding little dreamed of consorting with those who rule one of the powerful peoples of the world.

Mr. Garfield's nomination and election as president was, in his own eyes and in those of his family, among those little-expected events which change the whole current of life. He had his ambitions and his hopes, but there was not in his mind or his disposition that confidence of high honors which makes some men receive distinguished office with the feeling that it is their inevitable due. He boasted no star and, indeed, vaunted no mission. He was rather the modest statesman in politics who believed in right and duty and could not fail to make on all who knew him the impress of a good man, wise and kind.

The relations between Mr. Garfield and his wife were those which so markedly united Mr. and Mrs. McKinley, a loverlike tenderness which never diminished and was less observed in the case of Garfield only because the wife, in normal health, required less obvious attention than did Mrs. McKinley, the invalid.

She was deeply attached to Washington, not merely because of the agreeable social atmosphere and the position she enjoyed, but rather because it was the city filled with memories that responded to the pride she felt in her husband's honors. His death, after the long days of torturing anxiety, left her with resources so modest that the $350,000 fund for herself and her children, raised by popular subscription, furnished an income genuinely needed. It enabled her to make Washington her winter home, and she spent spring and summer at her old residence in Mentor, the suburb of Cleveland which holds the other, more intimate memories of her later married life.

When the more acute pangs of sorrow abated into some feeling of resignation Mrs. Garfield found her niche in a world that had looked too black to be lived in immediately after her husband's death. She had her children to give her heart to, and as they ranged afield in working out their destinies she devoted herself to charity and those helpful acts of kindness which have endeared her to all who know her.

HALOED BY WIDOWHOOD

Her features in earlier years, while they were strong and wholesome, would scarcely have been termed handsome. But as her widowhood has lengthened a rare and exquisite beauty has dawned in her face, as though her ordeal had crowned her with a consecration to all in life which can be accounted gentle and kind and true. The observance of her eightieth birthday recently emphasized the affection in which she is held as something personal to her and distinct from the sympathy felt for the widow of a murdered president.

It is such an affectionate regard, but with the element of tragic pity absent that attaches to Mrs. Cleveland. Her life in the White House, inaugurated amid rose colors of romance which for years tinged maiden thoughts with charmed admiration throughout the United States, was dignified by the imposing figure made by her husband at home and abroad. His immense forcefulness centered upon him an unusual attention, and Mrs. Cleveland's girlish loveliness was a spell to make the old and stately apartments more than merely homelike; they became almost romantic.

The steady increase in popular regard and respect, toward the last approaching reverence, which followed Mr. Cleveland into his retirement at Princeton, invested his wife long after White House honors were forgotten with a dignity before the American people that surpassed that attributed to her at the height of inferest in her distinction as a bride.

Yet she was at no time any more pretentious or ambitious a woman than the typical American wife and mother; her wifehood and motherhood, simply and sensibly borne, sufficed to hold a universal respect, as sincere and profound as that given her distinguished husband.

Her children played in Princeton's streets wearing clothes as modestly durable as those of any neighbor in very moderate circumstances; she herself remained just the sensible housewife to outward seeming, although her husband and his intimates appreciated her rare gifts of mind. Her active spirit kept her in close touch with local affairs, and she was a factor to be considered in all movements which bade fair to improve conditions of living, whether they were those of the prosperous or the poor.

Mr. Cleveland's death left her and her children in circumstances of real comfort, although of no very large wealth. It was significant of the devotion she had shown his declining years that when she had given due attention to the affairs which always arise on the death of a household's head she made the first trip abroad she has enjoyed since her marriage, and she took with her all four children, her daughters Esther and Marion and boys Richard and Francis.

And even that bit of recreation was more for the sake of her children than herself, for it was in the interest of their education. Her return, like her departure, was marked by the consistent avoidance of notoriety which she has displayed ever since notoriety rejoiced at finding such a shining mark to talk about.

With Mrs. Cleveland, as with Mrs. Garfield—as, in fact, with virtually every other woman who has ranked as first lady of the land—there has always been noticeable precisely the unassuming modesty which should serve as the best evidence of fitness to wear the title, in a society organized such as this, however widely the lesser lights may seek to depart from the original standards.

Mrs. Harrison, widow of Benjamin Harrison, has been the lady of the White House in practice, but never was in fact. Yet she survives as the widow of a president of the United States and has been true to the type of White House ladies personified in Mrs. Garfield and Mrs. Cleveland.

Hers was another romance of the home in Washington around which cluster so many memories that range from love to war. She was Mrs. Mary Dimmick, the favored niece of the Mrs. Harrison who was, in reality, the White House chatelaine. She was one of the Harrison family, so intimately a part of it that she made her home with her aunt even before General Harrison's election to the presidency.

When his incumbency became a certainty, the Harrisons congratulated themselves on the good fortune which had attached to them an aide in their social campaigns who was so handsome and so highly accomplished as Mrs. Harrison's niece. She did prove invaluable to her aunt, giving her that exceptional help which only youth, combined with excellent judgment and untiring industry, can bring to bear. With no trace of self-seeking, she enabled Mrs. Harrison to enjoy the relief from social strain that might have been afforded by another self, a relief particularly needful in the case of her aunt, whose failing health at length ended in fatal illness.

Mrs. Dimmick then proved an unwearying nurse, and she gave to General Harrison's household, after her aunt's death, the care which no one except one so near of kin and so well acquainted with family habits could supply. In 1896, when General Harrison was no longer president, she became his wife. One child, a daughter, Elizabeth Harrison, was born to them before the general died. The child received one full third in her father's real estate, about $63,000; and the widow a mountain residence owned by her husband, $16,000 in cash, and a life interest in the sum of $125,000. These facts were brought out in the legal dispute that was waged by the general's son, Russell Harrison, and his daughter, Mrs. Mary McKee.

The widow has given herself up to the care of her child and has been even less in the public eye than Mrs. Cleveland, a simple and peaceful existence, content with the modest competency she and her daughter possess.

So, of all the women who have lived in the White House and been hostess at its great functions, the only two who have the memories and their husbands at the same time are Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Taft, whose experiences are still in the making. Both these ladies have been charmingly and sincerely true to the best traditions of White House dignity and hospitality. And both, when those who know them best speak of their natures, appear in the role of the wife who is absorbed in the welfare of her husband rather than in the social aspects of Washington life.

And that, too, is in accordance with the traditions of the White House at Washington.

Mrs W. H. Taft, The Present Mistress of the White House.
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Mrs. Grover Cleveland at the Time of Her Marriage.

As Mrs. Cleveland Looked a Few Weeks Ago.

MYTH MAKER Of OUR REVOLUTION

Parson Weems Peddled His Own Histories. | King George's Ministers Wanted Diamond Necklaces for their Mistresses. | The Far Famed Britannia Alone, Her Faithful Lion Lay Roaring at Her Feet.

IT IS the Fourth of July—this year, last year, next year, any year. A hundred million patriots and near-patriots, born of Mayflower stock or born of Magyar hunger for American opportunities, recall the familiar picture of 136 years ago.

A weak, almost helpless people, hemmed between the oak-ribbed power of Britain on the sea and the whetted scalping knives of the savages on their land. Patient, meek, long suffering, starved and oppressed until Christian humility can bear no more, the handful of patriots rise in their might. In thunder tones the voice of freedom calls. Daring all—all hanging together lest all hang separately, in the words of one of their providential leaders—they hurl defiance in their oppressor's teeth; starve, freeze, perish of wounds and privation; yet never falter, never quail, until at last their hateful foe, giant among the giant nations of the earth, draws back in horror and dread of their sublime prowess and abjectly acknowledges the justice of their holy cause.

That's the vision Fourth of July conjures up, phrased in strictly appropriate style, isn't it?

Well, the real truth is a sad story. But, sad as it is, every year is making its verity more evident, as every year makes it more evident that the vision, like the style of its description, belongs to the utterly unreliable brain and the fire-alarm pen of the first American popular historian, Rev. Mason L. Weems, book peddler, fiddler, faker and the most cheerful old liar who ever came down the pike in dire need of earning a dollar.

FOR a good many years the intelligent patriots of the United States, guided by some emphatic hints given by honest historians, have had their doubts about the cruel oppressions of the British and the meek forbearance of the patriots. Every little while some American author of high standing for moral courage and cold facts, like Owen Wister, would drop overboard into the ocean of conflicting statements and bob up, gasping from the muck of reality he had struck under the surface of sublime humility and superhuman courage which has adorned all the history Americans, as a whole, ever knew. There was even one secretary of war in the United States who explained that the militia of the revolution included so many deserters that it was a miracle there was any revolution at all.

This year the historical facts of that portentous conflict reached the stage of study before the American Philosophical Society, which may be rated among the most conservative and dignified scientific bodies in the world.

FICTIONS OUTLIVE FACTS

Sidney G. Fisher, in an elaborate study of the actual conditions attending the revolution, found that the making of myths about it began almost before the revolution did, which is about a thousand years or so ahead of mythmaking in other lands. This shows not only what an enterprising people Americans are, but also in what reverence they hold their finest liars.

"When he got all through he hadn't the smallest hope to express that his countrymen will ever forsake the fictions and believe the facts. The original lying was done at a time of such necessity, it stood so long the test of time, it has been so ingrained and inborn in the very convolutions of the American brain, that the millions yet unborn will be prepared to fight harder in defense of the lying legends than others have fought for the sake of the truth.

Yet the reasons for the myths now reverenced were perfectly simple and natural.

"Though there was a large loyalist party," explained Mr. Fisher, "in some places a large majority, it was so completely defeated, hunted down, terrorized and driven out of the country, scattered in Canada and various other British possessions, that, to use a vulgarism, they 'never opened their heads again.' Only in recent times has any one had the face to collect their evidence and arguments from the original sources and publish them. The successful party in America ignored them, to make it appear that the revolution was a great, spontaneous uprising of the whole American people without a faction or disagreement among themselves. In England, strangely enough, they were suspected of being half rebels and were treated as somewhat contemptible objects of charity, or, at best, as mere provincials.

"In the second place," added Mr. Fisher, "we were long a very disunited people. Our writers and able men struggled to build up a nation and give dignity and respect to everything, to make no damaging admissions, to let no smallest fact creep out that might be taken advantage of. It was too much to expect that they should describe the factions and turmoil of the revolution as they really were; the military absurdity of the British general, Howe, letting it go by default; the cruelty and persecutions inflicted on the loyalists, and their large numbers. So they described a revolution that never happened and never could happen, a whoop-and-hurrah-boys revolution, all spontaneous, all united, merciful, noble, perfect; all virtue and grand ideas on one side; all vice, wickedness, effeteness and degeneration on the other."

PLAIN AND FANCY FORGERY

With which candid preface Mr. Fisher reviewed one life of Washington, which furnished a pedestal of divinity for the national hero and left him so much of a demigod and so little of a man that most of him, the real him, has evaporated until the full-blooded, human, intelligibly great Washington is as much of a mummy as any Pharaoh who ever stank of bitumen. It was written by Jared Sparks, president of Harvard College, a perfervid patriot, who, for his country's sake, did a lot of artistic lying and turned his facile pen to much journeyman's work in plain and fancy forgery.

There was a third cause. The patriots in the revolution were too busy fighting and hustling to write any history; they had both hands and their mouths full making it. But, over in England, the Whig party, in opposition to the Tories, was publishing analyses of events in America in its Annual Register, from the eloquent pens of orators like Burke and Chatham. These gentlemen argued that the rebels needed only be treated kindly to come running back to their allegiance, and they pictured them as suffering angels. The basic truth, Mr. Fisher pointed out, was that the colonists belonged to the irreconcilable magna charta breed who would be the equals of the best Britons at home or would be independent rulers of themselves. The Tories, after a while, did yield to them everything they could possibly ask except independence; but their necks were stiffened against even a cobweb for a yoke from the first gunshot of their rebellion. The beautiful picture of their loyalty and their sufferings, of their moderation and virtues, of their successes and constancy, as painted by Britain's foremost writers in the Annual Register, not only flattered the newly born national pride, but it was for some years the only readily available record of revolutionary events to be obtained. So it happened that the first histories of the revolution were drawn entirely from that British source and were infinitely more conducive to American complacence than if they had been compiled from the genuine records here.

The crowning myths, however, were supplied by the Rev. Mr. Weems, a born genius in superlatives, an utterly conscienceless old fraud as a historian, a time novelist mislaid by luck in the early nineteenth century, who hit the popular hunger for something really satisfying and gug-gug-glorious about the heroisms of the revolution. As a popular historian, Prescott, Motley and Parkman have proved mere hewers of wood and drawers of water beside his Phoebus soarings.

MAN OF VARIED PARTS

Parson Weems had a church in Virginia, near Mount Vernon. He was a country book agent for Matthew Carey, of Philadelphia. He was a stump speaker whose talents were exercised from a wagon, like an Indian medicine faker. He was a fine fiddler, who could make the country lads and lasses shake a leg till 2 in the morning. He had a big family, and he needed the money. So he wrote lives of Washington, Franklin and Marion, which Carey published and he sold, to mutual profit and the eternal misguidance of the whole American people. The life of Washington ran through forty editions. He made of Washington, the social, genial, card-playing gentleman, a sanctimonious wooden image, a Sunday school lay figure that will never escape the fraud of unreality the fiddling parson put upon him. Of the revolution itself he made a homeric and biblical combat of giants, titans and mammoths arrayed against the unfathomable corruption and wickedness of a dozen dragons and fiends who called themselves the king and ministry of England. He didn't care a hang about facts; he never did a stroke of research; he simply took the Whigs' Annual Register and whooped its biased records up about 500 degrees and cut loose for heroisms in a style mixed up of scripture, Homer, Virgil and the vigorous backwoods of his native land. He was, Mr. Fisher thinks, the greatest mythmaker who ever lived, and he has old Homer and gentle Virgil pushed down among the kindergartners.

In Parson Weems' histories everything rages and storms, slashes and tears. In his battles, the Americans and the English plunge their bayonets into each other's breasts and "fall forward together, fainting, shrieking in death and mingling their smoking blood."

"Why was this cruel war made?" the parson asks in dealing with its cause. "Simply because the king wanted money for his hungry relations and his ministers stakes for gaming tables or diamond necklaces for their mistresses."

"It was the most popular, short, easy, practical explanation that could have been devised," Mr. Fisher comments. "It reveals nothing of the real issue at stake; nothing of the question of the supremacy of parliament or the other great principles involved. But it pleased vast numbers of the people; they could grasp it instantly. It appealed to their suspicions of what the effete monarchies across the Atlantic really were."

It has stuck to this day; and in spite of Mr. Fisher's concluding appeal to his compatriots to see their revolution in its real dignity and its true human perspective, it seems likely to stick forever.